



Designate the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) as a Terrorist Organization

A Global Call for the AU, Canada, US and EU to label Africa's Monstrous Terrorist Group, Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) as a Terrorist Organization.

In 2018, Tigray People's Liberation Front's (TPLF) repressive rule and its political domination of Ethiopia ended, and Prime Minister Abiy came to power. PM Abiy was seen as an inspirational and transcendent leader. There was hope that PM Abiy would be successful in implementing democratic reforms and eliminate – once and for all – the need for armed resistance as a means of asserting individual rights and political aspirations. Unfortunately, what transpired in the last five years is the opposite of that hope. With several violent fighting; ethnic conflicts in many regional states; TPLF starting an armed insurrection in Northern Ethiopia; armed guerilla type fighting in Oromia by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and neighboring regional states, Ethiopia's internal security keeps on deteriorating. The following is a list of major violent events that have resulted in the destruction of property, displacement of people, injury, and deaths since April 2018.

- Failed Reconciliation attempts between Oromia and Somali Regions from 2016 to 2017 resulted in over a million Oromos being internally displaced and additional fighting in May to December 2018.
- Violence between Gedeo and West Guji with nearly 300,000 Internally Displaced people - June 2018.
- Violence in Addis Ababa during Prime Minister Speech in Addis Ababa – June 23, 2018.
- Violence in Burayu against Gamo People – September 2018.
- Violence in Addis Ababa OLF Rally over flags – September 2018.
- Demolition of almost 3,700 homes in Legetafo leading to the displacement of residents (February 2019)
- Violence in Bale, Jimma, Arsi, Ziway, Dera, Shashamene, Addis Ababa and Ambo following the withdrawal of the security detail for Politician Jawar Mohammed – October 2019
- Violence in Addis Ababa 22 Area over disputed church construction – February 2020
- Violence following death of artist Hacahalu Hundessa – June/July 2020
- Violence in Metekel area of Benishangul Gumuz region – August/September 2020
- Violence in Bekoji – December 2020
- Violence in Bati – March 2021
- Violence in Ataye – March to April 2021
- Violence in West and East Wellega – August 2021
- Violence in Addis Ababa over flags at Epiphany Celebration – January 2022
- Amhara Massacre in Tole and Sene Kebeles – June 2022 (most horrific massacre)
- The Northern Ethiopia TPLF Insurrection (November 2020 to October 2022)
- The Oromo Liberation Army led Oromia Insurrection (August 2018 to Present)



The last two insurrections are notable for the hundreds of thousands of lives lost and the destruction of property. With the TPLF's defeat, handing over of heavy weapons, and its agreement on paper to lay down its light arms, there is hope that the fighting in the north has finally come to an end. However, there is serious concern that the issue of Welkayit and Raya could lead to a resumption of armed conflict in northern Ethiopia.

The violence in Oromia stands out as it has terrorized many Ethiopians, especially civilians that are attacked based entirely on their ethnicity. Due to its unpredictability, brutality, and randomness, many Ethiopians are certain and expect with dread that some gruesome violent event may happen anytime in Oromia and neighboring regions. Ethiopians also think that there is a good chance that these violent activities may lead to a larger conflict between Amharas and Oromos and terrorize the whole country.

What is Terrorism?

The UN defines terrorism as "acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims". The UN also states that terrorism includes "criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes" and that such acts "are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other nature that may be invoked to justify them."

The United Nations' 1987 Additional Protocol to the 1949 Geneva Conventions clearly includes Internal fighters in its humanitarian rules during times of war. Article 13 - Protection of the civilian population clearly states "Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited."

Who is the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and is it a Terrorist?

OLA or Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) Shene is the military wing of OLF that splintered from OLF. Shene also called "Shane," is reportedly derived from the Afan Oromo word Shan which means five and refers to the fifth faction or splinter group from OLF. OLA is a violent armed group targeting mainly soft targets such as innocent civilians. Killing innocent women, children, and elderly; robbing banks and looting property; holding national and international aid workers for ransom are some of its modus operandi. In addition, OLA utilizes armed insurrection against the federal government. OLA aims to install the tyranny of a select few from a single ethnic group on the entire population of Ethiopia. Chaos and mayhem are its preferred choice for achieving that goal.

Darrell Trent, in 1974 stated that "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Therefore, it is worth asking whether the OLA or OLF Shene are freedom fighters. Until January 23, 2023, OLA did not articulate its political agenda. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that it was "fighting" not out of principle but to get noticed as an entity. While its manifesto claims, "Our fighters understand that the Amhara and other non-Oromo residents of Oromia who live among the Oromo people are citizens of Oromia. Their rights are sacrosanct and inviolate that cannot be infringed under any circumstances." This declaration seems to be a damage control action for the many documented atrocities perpetrated by its combatants. Since OLA's manifesto also brings up the acknowledgment



of "the Oromo peoples' longstanding proprietary right" to Addis Ababa as a confidence-building measure, its commitment to peaceful political struggle is questionable.

OLA claims Oromos support its fight. However, its supporters deny that OLA has attacked Amharas civilians. Yet, OLA Leader Jaal Marro (also known as Kumsa Diriba) did not condemn the terrorist act of killing Amhara civilians when interviewed by Reyot Media and blamed the government for the atrocities. His lack of condemnation shows that the death of non-Oromos is not his concern. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Human Right Watch, and Amnesty International denounced OLA's latest ethnic-based killings. Deprose Muchena, Amnesty International's Director for East and Southern Africa, said, "These horrific killings in Tole (June 2022), allegedly at the hands of the Oromo Liberation Army, reveal its perpetrators' utter disregard for human life." Human Rights Watch has said, "Civilians in Western Oromia Left Unprotected" and "Armed Group Kills Hundreds of Amharas in June (2022) Massacre".

In his January 2023 interview, Field Marshall Berhanu Jula, Ethiopia's Chief of Staff for Armed Forces, describes OLF Shene as a disorganized entity that relies on random acts of violence led by field commanders without any direction from its "leaders." He goes on to say that random acts of violence and terror have no political aim. This confirms that OLA is hell-bent on creating chaos as a terrorist entity.

Legesse Tulu, Minister for government communication services, said in his January 2023 interview that the Ethiopian government would pursue peaceful, political, and other means to end OLF Shene as a security threat. He also called upon the Ethiopians, especially Oromos, to pressure OLF Shene to end its "wicked activity targeting citizens." The above statements from these two high-ranking Ethiopian officials clearly indicate that the Ethiopian government considers OLA a terrorist organization. It is also worth noting that the Ethiopian parliament designated the TPLF and OLF Shene (OLA) as terrorist organizations in May 2021.

U.S. Criteria to designate Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO)

The United States Department of State – Bureau of Counterterrorism identifies terrorist groups that have “engaged in planning and preparations for possible future acts of terrorism or retains the capability and intent to carry out such acts” and designates them as Foreign Terrorist Organizations or (FTO). The designation is based on a determination of whether the “organization’s terrorist activity or terrorism threaten(s) the security of U.S. nationals or the national security (national defense, foreign relations, or the economic interests) of the United States.” The [Link](#) here shows a List of FTOs.

Since the U.S. Designation is the more known one, African Union (AU), European Union (EU), and Canada Terrorist Organization designations are not discussed.



Repercussions or Effects of FTO Designation

The FTO designation makes it “unlawful for a person in the United States or subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to knowingly provide ‘material support or resources’ - any property, tangible or intangible, or service, including currency or monetary instruments or financial securities, financial services, lodging, training, expert advice or assistance, safehouses, false documentation or identification, communications equipment, facilities, weapons, lethal substances, explosives, personnel’ to a designated FTO. In addition, it forces U.S. financial institutions to freeze the FTO funds and report it to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. This [Link](#) provides details on the effects of an FTO Designation.

The FTO designation will also:

- Curbs terrorism financing and encourages other nations to do the same.
- Stigmatizes and isolates designated terrorist organizations internationally.
- Deters donations or contributions to and economic transactions with named organizations.
- Heightens public awareness and knowledge of terrorist organizations.
- Signals to other governments our concern about named organizations.

Recent and Ongoing Terrorism in Ethiopia:

Due to the inability of PM Abiy’s government to stop attacks on civilians, its hands-off approach towards fighting a designated terrorist group, this vicious group, has been able to control territory in different parts of Ethiopia. As many believe and as admitted by some government officials, elements of the ruling Prosperity Party aid and abet this group. The narrative forwarded by the PM about the so-called Amhara Shene (which is a clear false equivalency to OLF Shene) was an attempt to muddy the fact about who the terrorist is, where terror is happening, and against whom the terrorism is being perpetrated.

Ethiopians expect with dread that future terrorist acts will happen anytime, indicating that terrorism exists in Ethiopia. The University of Maryland Global Terrorism Database (GTD) – ([See Link Here](#)) provides the following information on terrorist events in Ethiopia. Please note that the most recent data only goes to the end of 2020. The database lists the Oromo Liberation Front (meaning the OLA) as a perpetrator of several terrorist acts.



DATE	COUNTRY	CITY	PERPETRATOR GROUP	FATALITIES	INJURED	TARGET TYPE
2020-12-23	Ethiopia	Bekoji	Gumuz militia	222	38	Private Citizens & Property
2020-12-15	Ethiopia	Umugu	Oromo Liberation Front	19	24	Private Citizens & Property, Private Citizens & Property
2020-11-01	Ethiopia	Gumi Eldalo	Oromo Liberation Front	4	3	Business
2020-11-01	Ethiopia	Seka-Jerbi	Oromo Liberation Front, Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF)	10	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property
2020-11-01	Ethiopia	Gilla-Gogola	Oromo Liberation Front, Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF)	11	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property
2020-11-01	Ethiopia	Gawa Qanga	Oromo Liberation Front, Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF)	11	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property
2020-07-04	Ethiopia	Bati	Oromo Liberation Front	0	5	Business
2020-07-04	Ethiopia	Bati	Oromo Liberation Front	Unknown	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property, Government (General), Private Citizens & Property
2020-06-30	Ethiopia	Bale	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property, Business, Private Citizens & Property
2020-06-30	Ethiopia	Jimma	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property, Business, Private Citizens & Property
2020-06-30	Ethiopia	Arsi	Unknown	3	0	Private Citizens & Property, Business, Private Citizens & Property
2020-06-30	Ethiopia	Ziway	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property, Business, Private Citizens & Property
2020-06-30	Ethiopia	Dera	Unknown	7	Unknown	Police, Business, Private Citizens & Property
2020-06-30	Ethiopia	Shashamene	Oromo Liberation Front	Unknown	Unknown	Educational Institution, Business, Private Citizens & Property
2020-06-29	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	Oromo Liberation Front (suspected)	1	0	Private Citizens & Property
2020-02-23	Ethiopia	Ambo	Oromo Liberation Front	0	29	Private Citizens & Property



2020-02-21	Ethiopia	Burayu	Aba Torbe, Oromo Liberation Front	1	3	Police, Government (General)
2019-12-04	Ethiopia	Unknown	Oromo Liberation Front	Unknown	Unknown	Private Citizens & Property
2019-10-05	Ethiopia	Ataye	Oromo Liberation Front (suspected)	3	4	Private Citizens & Property
2019-09-12	Ethiopia	Burayu	Oromo Liberation Front	0	9	Police, Private Citizens & Property
2019-01-28	Ethiopia	Amaro	Oromo Liberation Front	2	0	Private Citizens & Property
2019-01-13	Ethiopia	West Wellega district	Oromo Liberation Front	0	0	Government (General)
2019-01-12	Ethiopia	Unknown	Oromo Liberation Front	Unknown	Unknown	Business
2019-01-13	Ethiopia	West Wellega district	Oromo Liberation Front	0	0	Government (General)
2018-12-19	Ethiopia	Unknown	Oromo Liberation Front	10	1	Transportation
2018-10-27	Ethiopia	Arba Minch	Oromo Liberation Front	4	3	Private Citizens & Property
2018-10-17	Ethiopia	West Wellega district	Oromo Liberation Front	0	0	Private Citizens & Property
2018-10-17	Ethiopia	East Wellega district	Oromo Liberation Front	0	0	Private Citizens & Property
2018-09-26	Ethiopia	Gimbi	Oromo Liberation Front	4	0	Government (General)
2018-06-23	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	Oromo Liberation Front	2	156	Private Citizens & Property

In addition, the following table compiled from information obtained from the Amhara Association of America provides documentation of terrorist acts from January 2021 to January 2023.



No.	DATE	CITY	ALLEGED PERPETRATOR GROUP	FATALITIES	INJURED	ABDCTED	DISPLACED	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	REMARK
1	12/26/2022 & 12/18/2022	Haro Town (Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	46	16			Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_f78d980661574c9abaffba6c8204c153.pdf	
2	11/29/2022 & 11/18/2022	Kiremu Woreda (East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	27	17	64		Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_36c08f7b93a34b35984676282f8e7b49.pdf	
3	11/29/2022 & 11/18/2022	Kiremu Woreda (East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	25	7			Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_12462cdebe54022be8f76717093cbae.pdf	See Incident No. 2 above
4	Starting 11/2022 Seven Incidents	Dera Woreda of North Shewa Zone	Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	73				Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_65f70a212e4b41579f6f523082119271.pdf	
5	2022-05-29	Awjemis Desert of Wuzka Kebele, Dangur Woreda in Metekel Zone	TPLF, Gumuz militants & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	6		5		Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_d55ff4a2eb4d4f1fa7b0b4b3b63357d7.pdf	
6	From 08/11/2022 to 11/02/2022	Huruta Dore Kebele, Jeju Woreda, Arsi Zone (Oromia Region)	Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	23				Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_5fd876b8e55c47ac96d379639b1250c2.pdf	
7	2022-09-30	Fentale Woreda of East Shewa Zone (Oromia Region)	Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	12	6			Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_db0588df2516473b8b0e62e2be01f18e.pdf	
8	09/23/2022 & 09/25/2022	Jarte (Jardega Jarte Woreda & Amuru (Amuru Woreda) towns in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone (Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	170				Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaa.com/ugd/e494ca_9b3da69f484e41f6aee9f8142ef24f06.pdf	



9	2022-09-09	Uke Kersa town, Guto Gida Woreda, East Wollega Zone (Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	35	5			Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_25e6194b63de4cc2ba034597e1dd1382.pdf	
10	08/29/2022 to 09/08/2022	Agamsa town, Amuru Woreda, Horo Guduru, Wollega Zone (Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	71		20		Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_473ac1d0ce3b49b182ce4203326ecd7.pdf	
11	2022-07-04	Lemlem Kebele, Hawa Gelana Woreda, Qelem Wollega Zone (Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	308	36		14,860	Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_0b07cf22b7c14aff824b80248eca52cc.pdf	
12	2022-06-18	Tole Kebele, Gimbi Woreda, West Wollega Zone (Oromia Region)	Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	554	40	More than a 100		Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_a4fb7b2180774e8c9d4370cf1dfec8b.pdf https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_4fe8c95335b04817bcc19ccd8a8767a.pdf	* Most heinous event documented
13	04/18/2022 and 04/19/2022	Efratana Gidim and Kewet Woredas of North Shewa Zone (Amhara Region)	Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	12	22			Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_d4080679272e4066bcff015097ae5109.pdf	
14	Between 10/01/2021 and 12/31/2022	West Shewa and East Wollega Zones (Oromia Region)	Coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	205	56	23	81 (Detained)	Private Citizens & Property	https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_b4f07eff036e49b1859f03ee4b4374f6.pdf	
15	2021-12-02	Anbo Wuha village in Antsokiya Gemza Woreda of North Shewa Zone (Amhara Region)	Coalition of Togray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) & Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) Militants	66				Private Citizens & Property	16. https://www.amharaaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_a055f4412ce24f2c9cfeb0b827576e4a.pdf	



Some Ethiopian activists and rights advocates have even suggested that OLA's atrocities should be categorized as genocide because they primarily target ethnic Amharas. They demand that the massacres and ethnic cleansing should be addressed as per UN conventions against perpetrators of genocides. While it is crucial to bring perpetrators of violence to justice, it is a less complex process to identify a terrorist rather than genocide. In addition, isolating and weakening any organization that kills civilians with impunity is, in the words of MLK, "... **the fierce urgency of now**. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there 'is' such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action."

What can be done to stop OLA from its Terrorist Act?

As the Global Terrorism Database shows, OLF-Shene, also known as OLA, is accused of many terrorist acts. The Ethiopian Parliament has designated OLF Shene as a terrorist organization. Ethiopian officials have called OLA terrorists. Many Human Rights Organizations have accused OLA of massacres. The gruesome videos and independent analysis of these violent acts show that OLA soldiers perpetrate the most heinous terrorist acts.

The terrorist designation curbs terrorism financing, stigmatizes and isolates the organization, and heightens public awareness and knowledge of terrorist organizations. It is good to ask about the value of the Terrorist organization designation since TPLF was designated as a Tier III Terrorist Organization, but several U.S. administrations supported it. TPLF was able to subvert the FTO designation, using its diplomatic and lobbyist connections as well as its military and security alliance with the West to fight terrorists in Somalia. OLA does not have a solid political and diplomatic organizational structure or stature. In fact, OLA's political goal is not clear even to Oromo partisans.

The OLA against US National Interest

Ethiopia is a country of 120 million population. It has been a U.S. economic and regional security ally for many years. The stability of Ethiopia and, by proxy, the Horn of Africa is a vital component of the U.S.'s National security, as expressed by the U.S. State Department officials and President Biden. Recently, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed "the need to bring an end to ongoing instability in the Oromia region." Therefore, when a group is hell-bent on violent insurrection, blatantly attempts ethnic cleansing, is engaging in terrorizing and killing innocent citizens to destabilize Ethiopia, the U.S. has a duty to follow its national interest in keeping peace and security in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region by designating this violent group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

Goals and Action Items

The intent of this activism effort is to stop OLA from killing innocent Civilians and end its use of terror to achieve politically undefined, anarchic, gangster-like terrorist actions. Therefore, Concerned Ethiopians call on like-minded Ethiopian individuals and organizations to get OLA designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State. The endorsing organizations, together with Ethiopian Advocacy groups and individuals, would prepare comprehensive data on OLA terrorist acts. Information gathered and shared by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission ([See Link Here](#)) and the Amhara Association of America ([See Link here](#)) are good sources that would



help compile updated OLA terrorist acts. We shall then contact the U.S. Department of State to get OLA designated as an FTO. In addition, a concurrent effort will be made to contact The African Union, European Union, and Canada to designate OLA as a terrorist organization by these governments and unions.

We call on all U.S., Canada and European citizens of Ethiopian origin and their friends to contact their representatives and follow up on what their government is doing to designate OLA as a terrorist organization.

Whether Ethiopians resolve their political differences through a National Dialogue, power-sharing agreement, or elections is up to them since those are all peaceful means to achieve political goals. Designating OLA as a Terrorist Organization will make OLA leaders, members, and supporters accountable for terrorizing and massacring innocent civilians and engaging in ethnic cleansing. If OLA chooses to continue its path of terrorism, then it will pay the political price by losing its relevance and eventually reach its demise.

OLA has brutally ended the lives of many innocent civilians, and as a consequence of its horrific acts, it must get ostracized. Furthermore, any individual who is a member of OLA or belongs to any organization and is complicit in terrorist acts must also be held accountable for their crimes.

OLA may realize the political price for violence is universal condemnation. In addition, our action may force OLA to rethink and abandon its strategy of ethnic violence and fomenting animosity between Oromos and Amharas. But most of all, if the life of one Ethiopian is saved by our actions, then our efforts are worthwhile.

Endorsed by the following Organizations:

People to People - **P2P**

American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee – **AEPAC**

Concerned Ethiopians - **CE**

Ethio-Canadian Network for Advocacy and Support – **ECNAS**

Ethiopawinet

Ethiopian American Civic Council - **EACC**

Ethiopian Advocacy Network - **EAN**

Global Ethiopian Scholars Initiative – **GESI**

Worldwide Ethiopian Civic Association Network - **WE-CAN**